

Minutes

Wilmington Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization Transportation Advisory Committee

Date: July 28, 2004

Members Present:

Lanny Wilson, Board of Transportation, Chair
Laura Padgett, Council Member, City of Wilmington, Vice-Chair
Lynette Carlisle, Council Member, Town of Leland
Gary Doetsch, Town of Carolina Beach
Al Ismert, Mayor, Town of Belville
Nancy Pritchett, Commissioner, New Hanover County
Jim Quinn, Council Member, City of Wilmington
Bill Sue, Commissioner, Brunswick County
Eulis Willis, Mayor, Town of Navassa

Staff Present:

Mark Tinkler, Senior Transportation Planner
Jonathan David, Associate Transportation Planner

1. Call to Order:

Mr. Wilson called the meeting to order at 4:00 PM.

Mr. Wilson told members he would like to welcome the Mayor of Belville and he asked Mayor Ismert if he would like to tell everyone about himself.

Mayor Ismert told members he appreciated the opportunity to attend today's meeting. He took office last December. This is his 7th month of a two year term. He has not been able to attend meeting before today because of the obligations to his job in Columbus County and it's difficult to get away from his job early in order to attend. He is glad for the opportunity to talk about the traffic concerns in his jurisdiction.

Mr. Wilson told Mayor Ismert the TAC is happy to have him here today, welcomes him aboard, and looks forward to working with him.

2. Approval of Minutes for May 26th Meeting

Mr. Sue made the motion to approve the May 26th meeting minutes. Mr. Doetsch seconded the motion, and the vote carried unanimously.

3. Old Business

Mr. Tinkler told members he had no items of old business.

4. Public Comment

Mr. Wilson thanked everyone for attending today's meeting and requested visitors to please introduce themselves to the group.

After the introductions, Mr. Wilson again thanked everyone for attending today's meeting. Mr. Wilson said he would now like to recognize Ms. Carlisle, who has special guests in attendance today who requested to make comments during this Public Comment portion of the meeting.

Ms. Carlisle told members she would like to introduce two of the residents from the Magnolia Greens development who represent the homeowners concerning a request for a stop light on Hwy 17. They are Judy Chmielenski and Evelyn Kelskey.

Ms. Chmielenski thanked everyone for allowing her and Ms. Kelskey to come before this meeting today. It is their understanding that a traffic light had been approved for the entrance to Waterford. The residents are concerned about the traffic situation coming out of Magnolia Greens and future traffic out of Westgate. The homeowners are very concerned about the potential for serious accidents at the intersection. They would like to present a petition today to the TAC. There are over 500 homes in Magnolia Greens and traffic safety is a major concern to them. She then turned the floor over to Ms. Evelyn Kelskey.

Ms Kelskey told members she is presenting a petition to the TAC with over 370 signatures asking for a traffic light on Hwy 17. With construction beginning in Westgate, which is directly across the street from Magnolia Greens, the traffic volume will only increase. There has already been one death at the intersection and residents feel a year is a long time to wait for the light. She then presented the petition to Mr. Wilson.

Mr. Wilson said the Department of Transportation is in the middle of updating the last warrant analysis for that location. They finished the report locally and are sending it up to the US 17 study staff for recommendation back to the study steering committee that Mr. Sue serves on. Mr. Wilson told Ms. Chmielenski and Ms. Kelskey he will be happy to keep them informed as to what the study recommends and thanked both of them for coming to the meeting today.

Mr. Wilson asked if they would leave their phone numbers, and he would be glad to have Mr. Roger Hawkins who is the Division Traffic Engineer to contact them to discuss any suggestions they might like to offer.

Chairman Wilson asked if anyone else had any comments they would like to make to the meeting. There were none.

5. Resolution – Thanking North Carolina Representative Danny McComas for his efforts in recent legislation benefiting transportation funding in our area.

Mr. Tinkler gave members copies of a resolution of appreciation for Representative McComas' efforts this past year in supporting transportation investment in this area.

Mr. Sue moved the motion and Ms. Padgett seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Ms. Pritchett said she would like to propose that we also thank Representative Justice for her hard work on our behalf. Ms. Pritchett suggested sending a letter expressing our appreciation for her efforts. Mr. Wilson agreed that would certainly be appropriate. The consensus of the group was in agreement and asked Mr. Tinkler to please do so.

Mr. Tinkler told Mr. Wilson he had another resolution he would like to enter into the agenda. It is a resolution regarding I-74 and I-20.

Mr. Wilson agreed and turned the floor over to Ms. Padgett who serves on that committee with Congressman McIntyre.

Ms. Padgett told members that as a result of the last meeting of the committee, she is asking the TAC to pass a resolution of support to the development of I-74/I-20 as a connection between South Carolina and I-74 which would bring a direct connection into Wilmington and the Hwy 74 corridor being brought up to Interstate status. This is a significant project and will be of great benefit to the Ports.

Ms. Padgett moved the resolution and Mr. Sue seconded the motion. With no further discussion the motion passed unanimously.

Ms Pritchett said she will also bring this item before the County Commissioners at their next meeting. Mr. Doetsch asked Ms. Padgett if this is an item that should be brought before all of the governing bodies of TAC members for consideration. She asked that they please do. It comes before the Wilmington City Council next Tuesday and hopes everyone can add it to their agenda. Mr. Wilson said he would like to also ask Mr. Tinkler to write a letter to accompany the resolution to both Congressman McIntyre and the Program Department at NCDOT for consideration when the draft TIP comes out.

6. MTIP Amendment – CFPTA Job Access and Reverse Commute Program Grant

Mr. Wilson turned the floor over to Mr. Tinkler. Mr. Tinkler told members New Hanover Transportation Services(NHTS) applied for a grant prior to the merger creating the Cape Fear Public Transportation Authority(CFPTA). This FTA national grant program originated for the purpose of getting people who live in the inner-city out to the suburbs to find jobs. The transit system just received notice that they received the grant for funding. This is a TIP amendment to accept the funds.

Ms. Padgett moved the resolution and Mr. Doetsch seconded the motion. With no further discussion the motion passed unanimously.

7. MTIP Amendment - Military Cutoff Extension Planning and Environmental Study

Mr. Wilson asked if the item could be tabled for the moment due to action in the legislature with the environmental community discussions regarding the connecting of the Hampstead bypass and the Military Cutoff Road extension project. In order to deal with this, NCDOT is going to pay for a corridor map that will allow the preservation of the corridor for three years. NCDOT will ask the City to obtain permission from the County to record the corridor map. Mr. Wilson said after discussion with Calvin Leggett today, he is asking that this item be postponed to allow for completion of this corridor map.

The motion to table this item was made by Mr. Sue and seconded by Ms. Padgett. With no further discussion, the motion passed unanimously.

8. PWP Amendment – rollover of funding for US 17 and NC 133 Area Collector Street Plan

Mr. Wilson turned the floor over to Mr. Tinkler for presentation of this item. Mr. Tinkler told members this is an amendment to the Planning Work Program. Last December the TAC re-programmed funds that were going to be used for the Military Cutoff extension preliminary engineering study to funding for the US 17 and NC 133 Area Collector Street Plan. They are now ready to issue the RFP but need to roll the funds over to this year.

Mr. Sue made the motion to roll the funds to this year and Ms. Carlisle seconded the motion. With no further discussion, the motion passed unanimously.

9. 2030 Long Range Transportation Plan Status

Mr. Tinkler explained that our current plan expires Monday, August 2nd. After discussions with Mr. Wilson and Ms. Padgett, a new target has been set for January. However, with building a new travel model from scratch it may go a little beyond that date. The Transportation and Planning Branch at DOT reviewed all the projects that could be affected and said we are clear until early to mid March. He said he and Mr. Jonathan Parker are currently hard at work building the new model but did want to make members aware of the plan's status.

Mr. Wilson asked if anyone had any questions. Ms. Pritchett asked if this item called for any action from the TAC and Mr. Tinkler said no. With that, Mr. Wilson moved forward to item number 10.

10. Recap of July 6th presentation to and action by Pender County Commissioners relative to request to join MPO

Mr. Tinkler gave member a brief update on recent events. The Pender County representatives had asked Mr. Tinkler to attend a commissioners' meeting on July 6th to make a brief presentation on becoming part of the Wilmington MPO. At the meeting the Pender County Commissioners passed a unanimous motion to authorize the County Manager to formally pursue joining the MPO. The request is being made by the area encompassing what is generally known as Hampstead and the area to the west through which the Hampstead Bypass will traverse.

Mr. Tinkler told everyone at the last TCC meeting he was reminded by Ms. Loretta Barren, the Federal Highway Administration representative, that adding Hampstead to the MPO would require that they are fully included in the Long Range Transportation Plan update. This is not possible due to the deadline issues so it would put anything that might come up in jeopardy in terms of TIP funding. They don't have any active projects in that area right now other than study the bypass, but given that potential, it was best to defer that official membership until the Long Range Transportation Plan is adopted.

Mr. Wilson told members in light of this information that he agreed perhaps the MPO can work closely with the Pender County/Hampstead area until the Long Range Transportation Plan is completed in order to avoid possible complications due to federal planning requirements.

Mr. Sue asked when Mr. Tinkler thought they could be brought in as a member. Mr. Tinkler told him it could be done before March '05, the same timeframe as the Plan. Mr. Tinkler then turned the floor over to Mr. Andy Hedrick, the Pender County Manager.

Mr. Hedrick thanked everyone for allowing him to continue to attend the TAC meetings. The Pender County Board of Commissioners asked him to convey the message that they would indeed like to become a member of the MPO but are willing to defer action until the MPO Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) is completed. They have asked to continue to be a part of the organization by attending meetings in this ex-officio capacity until the appropriate time for them to join.

Mr. Doetsch made the motion to allow Pender County/Hampstead to attend in an ex-officio member capacity until they can join the MPO as an official member. Ms Pritchett 2nd the motion.

Ms. Padgett agreed with the motion but asked if at the time they officially join the MPO, can their portion of funding be used as additional funds rather than replacement funding. The savings to the current members will not be noticeable but if it is used as additional funding, the money would add a couple extra thousand dollars to the balance. She told members this may not have to be decided right now but it is certainly something to consider.

Mr. Wilson asked Mr. Tinkler if he would come back with a recommendation from the TCC regarding Ms. Padgett suggestion.

With no further discussion, Mr. Wilson called for a vote. The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Tinkler asked that the TAC authorize him to write a letter for Mr. Wilson's signature that acknowledges the Pender County Commissioners actions and summarizes the information from today's meeting. Everyone agreed.

11. Freight planning meeting summaries

a. NC Ports, FHWA Freight Transportation workshop, 5/25-26 (Mowrey)

Mr. Wilson turned the meeting over to Mr. Mowrey with the State Ports for a report on the workshop he attended.

Mr. Mowrey told members he is a member of the TCC and had been requested to give a presentation to this group today on the Freight Transportation workshop he attended in May in Charlotte. Mr. Mowrey highlighted the important points he took away from the workshop on integrating freight into transportation planning.

Mr. Wilson thanked Mr. Mowrey for his presentation and asked Ms. Padgett and Mr. Tinkler to update everyone on the workshop they attended.

b. North Carolina Forum on Freight Mobility and Economic Prosperity, 6/21 (Padgett, Tinkler)

Mr. Tinkler told members that the Governor had set up a series of three forums on freight mobility and economic prosperity. The 1st was held here at UNCW in May 2003. This meeting was the 2nd in the series and the last will be held this winter in Charlotte. The first meeting was an overview of freight planning from the federal prospective. The second forum was more focused on presentations from shippers/users of the transportation system. The overall goal was what can public officials do and how can we make a difference to the users of the freight transportation system. A positive outcome for the meetings has been to help open the lines of communication between all parties involved in freight transportation planning.

12. 2004 NCAMPO Conference Planning updates

Mr. Tinkler reminded members of the upcoming conference October 20-22. The latest information on the conference can be found on the MPO's website at www.wmpo.org.

13. Project Updates

a. Cape Fear Public Transportation Authority (CFPTA) created July 1st, Wave Transit evening and weekend service, contractor changes (McNamee, Eby)

Mr. Wilson turned the meeting over to Ms. McNamee for an update.

Ms. McNamee told everyone that after over a year of planning and meetings, the Cape Fear Public Transportation Authority was created on July 1, 2004. This is the merger of the New Hanover Transportation System and the Wilmington Transit Authority. As of July 1st, all but three authority employees work for First Transit and they began hiring additional staff for the service enhancements to extend the hours and routes of the fixed route system as well as para-transit services.

b. Military Cutoff Road Widening

Mr. Wilson said he was sure everyone was well aware that the second round of bids came in over 20% above the engineers estimates and so they were rejected. The project was re-advertised and they anticipate the opening of bids again mid-August. They are hopeful to award the contract the 1st week of September. They were put out for bids with the same completion date and they don't feel they will lose any time due to re-bid. Utility relocation has continued this summer. The projected completion date will be around May 2007.

c. Military Cutoff Road Extension

A lot of things have happened in the last month. This facility has been added to the Highway Trust Fund as part of the Intrastate System. The NCDOT anticipates working with the City to develop a corridor map that can be recorded and protected.

d. US Route 17 Access Study – Porter’s Neck to Scott’s Hill (Tinkler)

Mr. Wilson told members they would like to extend the study over into Pender County with the cooperation of the Pender County Commissioners. Mr. Wilson suggested that three TAC members volunteer to help Pate Butler and other NCDOT committee members as they begin to prepare the study. He said our TAC members have the needed experience to help in dealing with the public regarding reasonable access issues. Any assistance on the project would be very helpful.

Ms. Pritchett and Mr. Doetsch volunteered to help with the study. Mr. Hedrick said he will be happy to have someone from Pender County volunteer to help the committee.

e. Town of Carolina Beach – US421 sidewalks, Carl Winner @ US 421 intersection improvements

Mr. Wilson recognized Mr. Doetsch to update this project.

Mr. Doetsch told members they are very pleased to get this project underway. It will be the intersection improvements on Carl Winner Avenue – 2 right turn lanes heading north out of Carolina Beach which will help with the afternoon congestion problems coming off of Canal Drive. The sidewalk portions of the plan will be from Goldsboro Ave. on the west side of 421, all the way to the Food Lion at the base of Carolina Beach Bridge. People will then have walking access all the way down 421. They hope these projects will be complete in early winter.

f. Public Meeting, Market Street Median – New Center Drive to Eastwood Road, July 27th, Wilmington City Council Chambers

Mr. Wilson asked Mr. Tinkler to update everyone on this item.

Mr. Tinkler told members the meeting went well. There was a lot of news coverage of the meeting. There were some businesses interests represented that were opposed to having their access restricted. Several area residents attended who were supportive and acknowledged the dangers involved with completely open access. This project is a test case for similar treatment of other sections of Market Street.

14. New Business:

There were no items of New Business.

15. Announcements

There were no announcements

16. Adjournment:

With there being no further business, Mr. Sue moved to adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 5:20.

Respectfully submitted

Mark Tinkler
TAC Secretary
/pb